Graphical user interface

Description automatically generated with medium confidenceA body of water with grass and trees around it

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

**Guidelines for Authors of STRP Publications**

*Second edition*

**Convention on Wetlands**

Guidelines for Authors of STRP Publications

*Second Edition*

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Cover photo by Johannes Plenio from Pexels.

# Abbreviations

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| STRP | Scientific and Technical Review Panel |
| IOP | International Organisation Partner |
| ISBN | International Standard Book Number |
| PRISMA | Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses |
| TOP | Transparency and Openness Promotion |
| COP | Conference of the Parties |
| SC | Standing Committee |
| TOR | Terms of Reference |
| TWA | Thematic Work Area |
| MWG | Management Working Group |

# Introduction

## About the Scientific and Technical Review Panel

The Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) is a subsidiary body of the Convention on Wetlands. The STRP is mandated to provide scientific and technical advice to Contracting Parties, the Conference of the Parties (COP), the Standing Committee (SC), the Secretariat and to other wetland users working on wetlands issues, to support implementation of the Convention. Further, as set out in [Resolution XII.5](https://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/cop12_res05_new_strp_e_0.pdf), the STRP should offer timely, effective, and efficient scientific and technical advice, guidance, and tools at the global, regional, and national levels (where feasible) to help stakeholders respond to the opportunities, challenges, and emerging issues related to wetland conservation and wise use.

## About the Author Guidelines

The STRP produces scientific and technical guidance responding to the needs of policy makers and practitioners, based on its work plan as approved by the Standing Committee. In order to effectively support implementation of the convention, it is important that all STRP publications meet the highest quality standards.

These author guidelines are designed to support task leads, lead authors and contributors in preparing STRP products, to ensure quality and consistency of all STRP publications, adherence with the modalities of the STRP in [Resolution XII.5](https://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/cop12_res05_new_strp_e_0.pdf), Annex 1[[1]](#footnote-1) and other guidance provided by the Conference of the Parties (COP), Standing Committee (SC) or Management Working Group (MWG), as well as to streamline the preparation process. Authors are expected to carefully review and follow these guidelines.

## Types of STRP Publications

All STRP products are developed based on its work plan for each triennium, including specific requests from the COP or the SC. The work plan outlines the general areas of focus, activities and priority tasks for the STRP, while requests from the COP or SC provide specific guidance on the information and support needed to address specific wetlands-related issues.

The STRP produce the following types of guidance to support the Contracting Parties in relation to wetland conservation and wise use. First, the STRP provides scientific guidance, which forms the foundation for technical guidance for policy makers and practitioners. Second, the STRP offers science-based technical guidance that meets the specific methodological needs of policy makers and practitioners. This guidance serves to inform and support the decision-making processes of those involved in wetland conservation and management.

The guidance is provided through the following types of STRP publications:

* **Policy briefs**, providing policy makers and decision makers with concise information on key wetland-related issues and recommendations for action (see section 5.1).
* **Technical reports**, providing in-depth analysis of specific wetland-related issues (see section 5.3).
* **Briefing notes,** providing scientific and technical information on wetland-related issues to a broader audience (see section 5.5)

The Secretariat may also choose to make pertinent background reports and studies publicly available as **white papers**. These are documents commonly produced as part of a contract or agreement with the STRP, or as an independent contribution to support the implementation of the Convention on Wetlands. These white papers are unofficial publications that provide valuable scientific or technical information and guidance (see section 5.7).

In addition, the STRP produces periodic **review and assessment reports** on the state of wetlands globally and provides recommendations for their conservation and wise use.

## Target Audience of STRP Publications

[Resolution XII.5](https://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/cop12_res05_new_strp_e_0.pdf) sets out that the STRP is critically important to the Convention in “*developing and providing scientific and technical guidance, linking wetland science to effective technical communications, and building understanding of the target guidance needs of the audiences*” (para. 14). The resolution furthermore outlines that all STRP products should be aimed at the following target audiences:

1. Policymakers, including those working in the environment and water sectors, as well as related fields such as energy, health and sanitation, agriculture, and infrastructure.
2. Practitioners, particularly wetland managers and stakeholders, as well as others from related fields, such as protected area managers and staff of wetland education centers.

STRP products may also be developed for other target audiences to leverage the knowledge and expertise of the STRP in new and innovative ways, and to help advance the goals of the Convention beyond the traditional audiences of wetland practitioners and policymakers. For example, possible target audiences for STRP products related to the Convention could include conservation organizations, NGOs, or other groups working on wetland restoration or management projects; local communities or stakeholders who are directly impacted by wetland conservation efforts; and educational institutions, such as universities or schools, that are interested in teaching students about wetland ecology, conservation, or policy.

To effectively reach the intended audience, it is crucial to have a clear understanding of needs of the target audience to enable effective communication as well as to determine what types of information or messages are most likely to resonate with them.

# Manuscript Preparation

STRP products should be prepared in accordance with the specifications outlined in the following section. The various scientific and technical products will be prepared and communicated to target audiences during the triennium, with assistance from the Secretariat’s communications team.

Further guidance on the specific types of STRP publications, including Briefing Notes, Technical Reports, and Policy Briefs, can be found in section 5.

## Roles and Responsibilities

The preparation of STRP publications involves several key roles and responsibilities, including:

* **Thematic Work Area (TWA) Leads**: These individuals lead the work on specific themes related to the STRP work plan and are responsible for ensuring that outputs are of high quality, relevant, and meet the needs of the target audience.
* **Task Leads**: These individuals are responsible for leading the implementation and development of specific priority tasks within each TWA. They work closely with contributors to ensure that the outputs are produced on time and for ensuring that the final output is of high quality.
* **Lead authors**: The primary author of a STRP product, typically responsible for leading the write-up of the initial draft of the output, such as Briefing Notes, Technical Reports, or Policy Briefs. They are also responsible for coordinating the contributions of other authors.
* **Contributors**: These individuals provide expertise and contribute to the development of specific products within each TWA. They work under the guidance of the lead author(s) and are responsible for providing relevant information and data, conducting research, and writing sections of the publication.
* **Secretariat**: The Secretariat provides support and guidance to TWA leads, task leads, and contributors, coordinating the peer-review process and ensuring that the final products are produced in accordance with the Convention's guidelines.

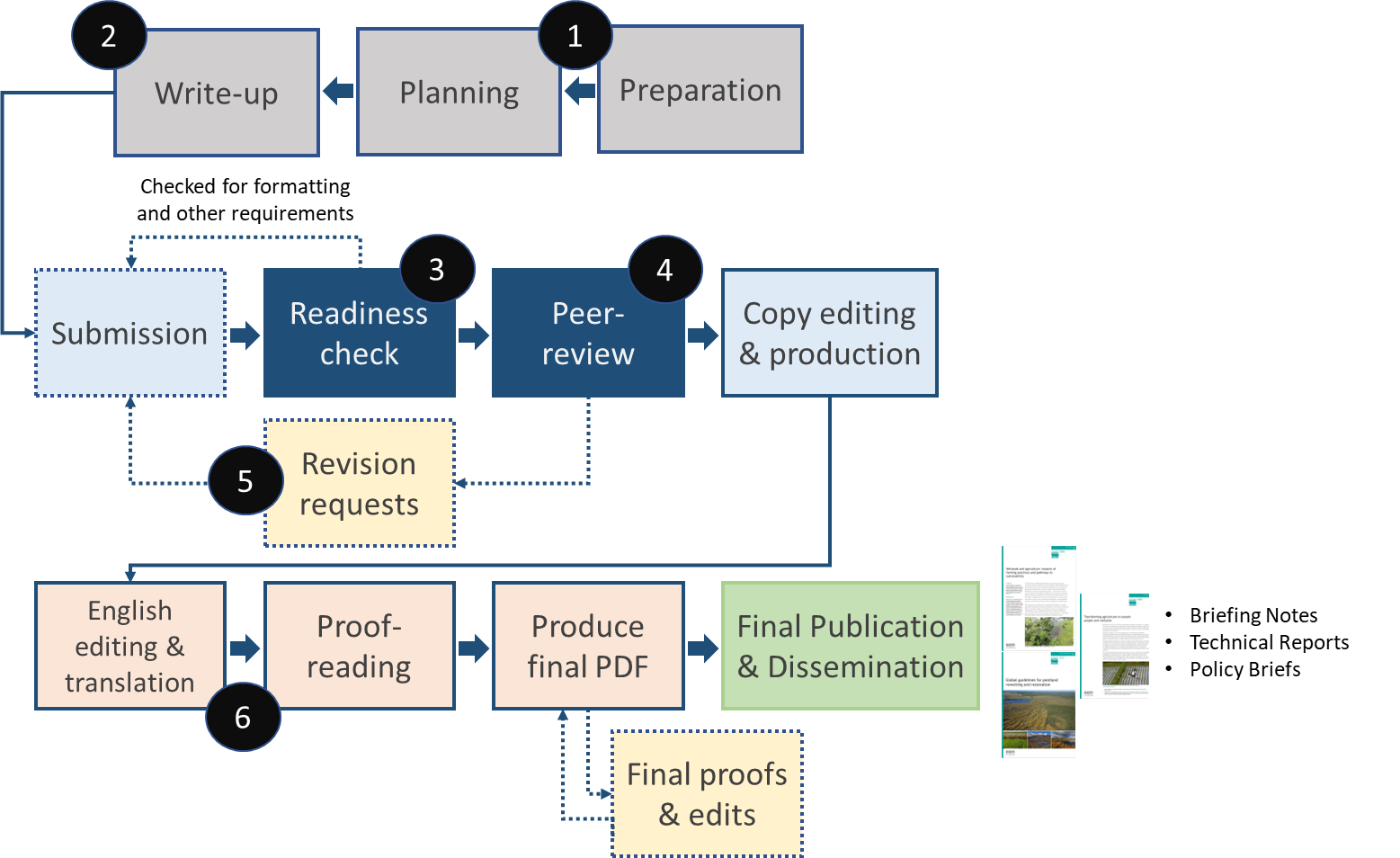
Each of these roles is important for the successful production of high-quality and relevant products.

## Overview of the publication process

The Secretariat is responsible for overseeing the publication process and ensuring that all guidelines are followed by task leads, lead authors and contributors. The publication process generally involves the following steps (see the process chart below as well for more details):

1. **Preparation and Planning**: The Secretariat should be consulted to discuss and conceptualize the needs and perspectives of the target audience before the preparation process begins. Conceptualizing and defining the STRP product, together with the Secretariat, is a critical first step in preparing the STRP publication. This should include a scoping document and Terms of References (TOR) for the task that define the publication output, establishes the specific purpose and scope of the work (e.g., whom it is for), set out a time plan, characterise who should be involved, as well as plan for its dissemination. When structuring the scoping document, framing arguments, and providing case studies and recommendations, it is important to consider the needs and perspectives of the target audience and TOR.
2. **Write-up**: The write-up process for a STRP publication is a rigorous and collaborative effort that involves multiple stages. The first step is to ensure that the scoping document and ToR are carefully reviewed and understood by all members of the writing team. This includes the lead author, contributors, and the Secretariat. Once the scope of the publication has been established, the writing team can begin the research and analysis phase. This may involve conducting literature reviews, collecting and analysing data, and synthesizing findings. The lead author is responsible for coordinating with contributors and ensuring that all contributions are integrated seamlessly into the draft output.
3. **Readiness Check**: The Secretariat will conduct an initial review of the draft output to ensure that it meets the standards and guidelines outlined in the author guidelines. If the document is not formatted correctly, or it does not meet the quality standards set by the Convention, the Secretariat may request revisions before moving to the peer-review stage. This step is mainly to ensure that the draft output is in line with the author guidelines.
4. **Peer-Review**: All draft outputs submitted for publication will undergo a double-blind peer review process, where at least two referees will review the draft manuscript. This is to ensure that the quality standards set by the Convention. Further details on the quality standards, review process and what preparatory steps are needed is available in section 3.2. The Secretariat may also provide revision requests at this point.
5. **Revision requests**: The authors will be asked to revise the text based on a review report. However, the authors are free to disagree with the recommendations, but must provide a clear justification for their decision. Any final decision on not following revision requests should be made in consultation with the Secretariat.
6. **Editing, proof reading and production**: Editing and final review by the Secretariat to check the proof for errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, and formatting. The final step is essentially to make sure everything looks and reads as it should before the file goes for production.

The Secretariat is responsible for producing the final publication, which includes language editing, translation, and formatting. These tasks may be outsourced to external parties, but the Secretariat remains accountable for the final output.



## Language and spelling

The Convention on Wetlands makes STRP publications available in the three official languages of the Convention: English, French, and Spanish. Draft outputs should initially be prepared in English (British English preferred). The Secretariat of the Convention is responsible for language editing and for translation into French and Spanish.

When preparing the output, it is important to use clear, concise language that is accessible to the target audience (see section 1.3). The lead author(s) should ensure that the text can be understood by individuals who are not experts in the subject matter. To achieve this, it is best to avoid complex sentences and academic styles of expression. The use of simple, straightforward language will help to ensure that the outputs are effectively communicating the intended information.

**General language guidelines**:

* The Secretariat recommends referring to the Convention as "the Convention on Wetlands," and subsequently, the abbreviated form "the Convention" may be used. Further guidance on the use of common terms is provided in Annex I.
* Capitalization should be used only for formally assigned titles, such as "Wetlands of International Importance". Lower case phrases may still be assigned acronyms, for example "terms of reference (TOR)."
* Spell out numbers less than 11 in text, e.g. "Most individuals were present in all four years of our study." Exceptions to this rule include statistical statements, e.g. "We had 3-6 years of data for each individual," and lists that include larger numerals, e.g. "The ages of the individuals were 8, 10, and 14 years, respectively." Numbers over 999 should be formatted with a comma as a delimiter, e.g., "1,000."
* Write currencies in figures, preceded by the relevant ISO currency code, with a space between the unit and amount. For example, "EUR 70,000" or "USD 20,000."
* Use the "day-month-year" date format with no internal punctuation, e.g., "21 January 2019.":

**Inclusive language:**

It is important to use inclusive language throughout all written materials, avoiding expressions that make assumptions about a person's beliefs, commitments, age, gender, race, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation, disability, or health condition. The lead author has a responsibility to ensure that the writing is free from any biases, stereotypes, slang, or cultural assumptions. Whenever possible, use gender-neutral language and avoid using gendered pronouns, such as "he" or "she". This helps to create materials that are accessible and respectful to all readers, regardless of their background or identity.

## Ethical standards and guidelines:

The preparation of STRP products needs to maintain a high standard, and guidelines set forth by the [Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE)](https://publicationethics.org/), including its [principles of transparency and best practice in scholarly publishing](https://publicationethics.org/resources/guidelines-new/principles-transparency-and-best-practice-scholarly-publishing), are applied as relevant.

Disputes over the validity of information reported in published STRP products will be resolved by the Secretariat. If an author is found to have engaged in unethical behaviour, they will be asked to respond to any substantiated allegations made against them. It is important to note that even after publication, any concerns related to ethics may still be subject to further investigation.

As the lead author, it is crucial to be aware of the following ethical issues. More details on each of these items are provided below.

* Data fabrication and falsification (see section 3)
* Plagiarism (see section 3.3)
* Authorship (see section 4.4)
* Competing interest (see section 4.6)

## Document formatting and accepted file formats

Simplicity in formatting facilitates the editing and layout process. The following guidelines are provided to ensure consistency and ease in the finalization of your manuscript:

* Manually number sections and subsections instead of relying on automatic numbering. If your document already has automatically numbered sections, remove them all.
* Format paragraphs with zero spacing before and after, and separate paragraphs with a line break. Use a hard return/enter to end each paragraph.
* Avoid wrapping text around figures or tables.
* Provide captions and cross-references to figures and tables manually, do not use automatic tools.
* Bullet points may be used to enhance readability and organization.
* Bold text may be used sparingly to emphasize key words.
* Hyperlinks should not be used in the main text. Any links should be added as comments in the document.

Manuscripts must be submitted as an editable Microsoft Word (.doc) file, not as a PDF. Additionally, source files for any photos, figures, schemes, and tables must be provided in separate files such as .doc, .xls, .ppt. (see page 6 for more information).

## Abbreviations

When using abbreviations in the text, it is important to write them out in full on their first use, and to use them consistently thereafter. A separate section for abbreviations should also be created at the beginning of the document for ease of reference. Avoid using abbreviations in headings.

## Copyright

To ensure compliance with copyright laws, all material used, including images and text, must be free of any copyright restrictions. If any copyrighted material is used, the lead author must obtain written permission from the copyright holder and properly credit the source in the text. It is important to note that obtaining written permission for copyrighted material may take some time.

## Photos, figures, schemes, and tables

It is essential that all photos, figures, schemes, and tables used are clearly numbered and properly referenced in the text and as part of the Table of Contents. The captions for each figure and table should be concise and descriptive, providing relevant information about the source, any digital manipulation, and the data being presented. It is the lead author's responsibility to ensure that all images and other graphical elements used in the article are obtained legally and properly credited in the captions.

Figures should be included within the text and also provided as separate files to the Secretariat. To ensure the highest quality and compatibility, the following file formats are preferred for images: TIFF, Adobe Photoshop, JPEG, Postscript (PS, EPS, or PDF), Adobe Illustrator, or PowerPoint, Excel, or Word if the figure was created in one of these programs. At final submission, tables and schemes must be provided in an editable format, allowing for easy editing and formatting.

## Reference style

A consistent citation style should be applied throughout relevant STRP products (e.g., policy briefs do not have citations). In-text citations should be made using the author-date system, where the author's name and the publication year are given in parentheses within the text.

Below are some examples of how in-text citations should be formatted:

* The concept of resilience in research is well-represented across various disciplines (Robertson, 2021).
* These findings are supported by the work of Rutger and Lefebure (2018).
* The impact of this phenomenon has been widely recognized and documented in the literature (Smith, 1980; Winkel et al., 2005; Pulzl et al., 2003, 2017).

Use of bibliography software such as [EndNote](https://endnote.com/) can help create accurate, complete and error-free references, minimizing the likelihood of typing mistakes and duplicated references. When using EndNote, the Conventions reference style should be downloaded (from the STRP Workspace or by following this link: [link]. In case manual preparation of references is necessary, it is the responsibility of the lead author to carefully check and verify the references for completeness and accuracy.

The following are detailed guidelines for referencing:

1. **Reference list**: The reference list should be a separate section located at the end of your paper. It should clearly distinguish from the main text of the paper.
2. **Text and reference list consistency**: Every reference cited in the text must appear in the reference list, and vice versa.
3. **Alphabetization**: The reference list should be organized alphabetically by the last name of the first author of each work cited.
4. **Author names**: The format for author names in the reference list should be Last Name, Initials (of First and Middle Names if provided). If there are two authors, use the ampersand symbol (&) instead of using the word “and”. If there are more than two authors, list all.
5. **Punctuation**: The punctuation and capitalization of the reference list should be consistent with the format used in the journal you are citing.
6. **Web references**: For web references with no author, provide the title of the article in the reference list, followed by the year it was written in parentheses. Also, include the date of retrieval and the URL. For example: Title of the Article (2022). Retrieved October 12, 2022, from http://www.ramsar.org.
7. **Data references**: For data references, provide the author names, title of the dataset, data repository, version (if available), year, and global persistent identifier.
8. **DOI**: If a publication has a DOI, include it in the reference.

Please note that authors bear responsibility for ensuring the accuracy and completeness of references.

## SI units

The [International System of Units](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_System_of_Units) (SI Units) should be used. When necessary, imperial, US customary, or other units should be converted to the corresponding SI unit for consistency and clarity. This ensures that measurements are consistent throughout individual products as well as across products and can be easily understood by a global audience.

## Footnotes and endnotes

To maintain readability and coherence of the text, it is recommended to limit the use of footnotes. Footnotes should be numbered consecutively throughout the text, starting from 1, and should be placed at the bottom of the same page where they are referenced. Most word processors, such as Microsoft Word, have a built-in feature for inserting footnotes directly into the text, which should be utilized whenever possible. Footnotes should be left-aligned and should not be included in the reference list. Endnotes should not be used.

## Statistical guidelines and data reporting

The lead author of a STRP publication is responsible for ensuring that the manuscript includes comprehensive information regarding any statistical analyses conducted or reported on. Where relevant, a methods and statistics section may be included in the manuscript, either as part of the main document or as supplementary material.

When statistical testing has been used, the following information should be provided:

* The name of the statistical test used
* The sample size (n value) for each statistical analysis
* The comparisons of interest
* A justification for the use of the selected test
* The actual P value for each test, expressed as a numerical value (e.g. P=0.05) rather than a statement of inequality (e.g. P<0.05)

While it is recognised that the majority of STRP products primarily involve the evaluation of published studies, it remains crucial to be clear about any statistical test used to generate each P value and to accompany the use of the word "significant" with a P value if any statistical analysis is conducted. Descriptive statistics should be used to summarize data sets, including the sample size (n value), the mean as a measure of centre, and a measure of variability, such as the standard deviation. For small data sets, ranges may be more appropriate than standard deviations or standard errors. Additionally, graphs should clearly label error bars. Lastly, if applicable, the full raw data used should be made available to the Secretariat during the review process or after publication.

## Supplementary materials

The submission of supplementary material is encouraged if it is deemed directly relevant to the understanding or interpretation of information presented in the STRP publication (see section 5.7 for more details). Examples of supplementary materials may include a more detailed description of the methods used, extended data sets and data analysis, or additional figures (where applicable or deemed as relevant as complementary information to the main publication).

All supplementary material must be submitted to Secretariat simultaneously with the main document, as separate files in suitable electronic formats. Clearly indicate all supplementary material at the time of submission and label the files accordingly, such as "Supplementary Figure 1", "Supplementary Data", etc. The main document should also reference the supplementary data where necessary, for instance, as "See Supplementary Data" or "See Supplementary Figure 1".

If deemed appropriate by the Secretariat, supplementary material will be made available online at the time of publication of the STRP product. Supplementary material will not undergo proofreading, copyediting or peer-review and it is the responsibility of the authors to ensure its accuracy. The Secretariat may request authors to adjust supplementary materials prior to making it available online.

# Production, editorial procedure and peer-review

## Guidelines and standards

A number of existing guidelines and standards should be used in the preparation of STRP products to ensure good publication practice is followed. This includes:

* [**Transparency and Openness Promotion (TOP)**](https://www.topfactor.org/), which covers citation standards, data transparency and openness in research reporting.
* [**Findability, Accessibility, Interoperability, and Reuse (FAIR) Principles**](https://www.go-fair.org/fair-principles/)**,** which addresses how data can be easily discoverable, accessible, and reused by other researchers.
* [**Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA)**](http://prisma-statement.org/), which enables readers to assess the trustworthiness and applicability of any review findings. If a review is carried out as part of preparing the STRP product, it is highly recommended that authors complete the [PRIMSA checklist](http://prisma-statement.org/PRISMAStatement/Checklist) and include it with their submission.

## Peer review process

The peer review of STRP products is conducted to ensure that they meet the quality standards set out throughout these author guidelines (e.g., TOP, FAIR and PRISMA) and that the products are based on sound research or methodologies, where applicable. The peer review process will be applied to all STRP product types and will involve having experts in the relevant field critically evaluate the STRP product, providing written feedback and suggestions for improvement. The review process is principally meant to help increase the credibility and reliability of all product types and ensure that the product is suitable for its intended purpose. Additionally, the peer review process is meant to help to identify any errors, biases, or limitations in the product, which can be addressed before it is made publicly available. Overall, the peer review process is managed by the Secretariat and represents a quality control mechanism that can help ensure that all STRP products are accurate, reliable, and of high quality.

* **Selection of reviewers**: The Chair and Vice-chair, in consultation with relevant Panel members, will recommend reviewers who are qualified and not involved in the production of the draft output. Reviewers will be selected by the Secretariat based on the recommendations provided by the Chair and Vice-chair.
* **Peer review process**: The draft output is sent by the Secretariat to at least two reviewers who are not involved in the drafting process (see page 3). Depending on the complexity of the subject matter or scope of the publication, additional experts may be engaged. Where relevant, double-blind review will be used, i.e. both reviewers and authors remain anonymous throughout the review process. It is important to ensure that the text has been prepared for double-blind reviewing (see below).
* **Review criteria**: Please note that the review criteria will be tailored to the type of STRP product being reviewed (e.g., the target audience and function of a policy brief is different from a guidance document). The following criteria can be seen as general guiding principles during the write-up meant to improve the overall quality of the draft output:
  + *Alignment with TWAs and priority areas of work*: Does the output align with the relevant TWA, priority area of work, and TOR underlying the STRP product, and does it contribute to advancing the STRP's objectives in this area of work?
  + *Methodological approach and data analysis:* Does the output use appropriate methodologies for the type of product being prepared, and is the data analysis (where applicable) conducted rigorously and appropriately?
  + *Validity and reliability of findings:* Are reported findings supported by evidence, and are they robust and consistent?
  + *Clarity and accessibility of presentation:* Is the information in the output presented in a clear, concise, and easy-to-understand manner, and are the methods and results (where applicable) transparently reported?
  + *Implications and recommendations:* Does the output provide clear implications and recommendations for policy, practice, or further workwith regards to the applicable TWA, priority area of work, and TOR?
  + *Contribution to the wider community of policy makers and practitioners*: Does the output address the needs of policy-makers and/or practitioners, and are the findings transferable to other relevant contexts?

Reviewers will submit to the Secretariat a review report that includes comments and recommendations.

* **Requests for revision**: The Secretariat will share the review report with the lead author, who is expected to address all comments and where relevant provide a written explanation of how they were addressed. The Secretariat ascertains that comments have been addressed satisfactorily. Examples of substantive corrections could include issues such as the omission of important information related to the applicable TWA, priority area of work, and TOR, errors in calculations or figures (where applicable) that affect the accuracy of the findings, instances of plagiarism, and misattribution of sources that may impact the credibility of the output.

## Plagiarism check

It is important to ensure that all STRP products are original and free from instances of plagiarism. The Secretariat may use software for plagiarism detection, such as [iThenticate](https://www.ithenticate.com/), during screening of draft documents and during the peer-review process.

# Front and Back Matter

## Title page

Any STRP product should include a title page including the following:

* Title
* Authors’ names and affiliations
* Authors’ biographies (see below)
* Acknowledgements (see below)
* Highlights
* Declaration of Interest statement (see below)
* If applicable, data availability statement (see below)
* Complete address for the lead author, including an e-mail address.

The Secretariat will add the citation, copyright information, disclaimer, and other pertinent information once the product has been finalised.

## Author biography

Authors are encouraged to add a biography (maximum 150 words) to the title page. This should be a single paragraph and should contain the following information:

* Authors’ full names followed by current position.
* Educational background, including institution and degree received.
* Work experience.
* Current and previous research interests

|  |
| --- |
| **Here is an example:**  **Johanna Smith** is the director of the Department of Zoology at Cambridge University in the United Kingdom. She has completed a PhD in Ecology and her research has mainly focused on wetland restoration and, more recently, on how to prioritise coastal blue-carbon ecosystems for conservation and restoration. She is the author of many articles in the field of ecosystem dynamics and the use of wetlands as a tool to mitigate and adapt to climate change. |

Do not provide a CV or résumé in place of an author biography.

## Author contributions

The lead author will need to acknowledge the authorship of the output by identifying the lead author(s) and any contributing author(s). In addition, the lead author will be required to allocate [CRediT roles](https://www.elsevier.com/authors/policies-and-guidelines/credit-author-statement) to authors from a taxonomy. This taxonomy will be used to create an authors’ contributions section which lists the specific contribution of each author in the published STRP product.

The CRediT taxonomy consists of 14 roles that represent the different contributions made by authors. The roles are as follows: Conceptualization; Data curation; Formal analysis; Funding acquisition; Investigation; Methodology; Project administration; Resources; Software; Supervision; Validation; Visualization; Writing – original draft; Writing – review & editing.

Authorship statements should be formatted with the names of authors first and CRediT role(s) following. The lead author is responsible for ensuring that the descriptions are accurate and agreed by all authors.

|  |
| --- |
| **Sample author statement**  **Lead author (s):** Erik Baker.  **Contributing author(s):** John Smith; Jenny Smith; Jan Svensson & Allen Atkinson.  **CRediT statement:** John Smith: Conceptualization & Methodology. Jenny Smith: Data curation, Writing- Original draft preparation. Jan Svensson: Visualization, Investigation. Erik Baker: Supervision. Allen Atkinson: Writing- Reviewing and Editing. |

## Acknowledgments

Collate acknowledgements in a separate section at the end of the title page. List those individuals who provided help during the production of the output (e.g., providing language help, writing assistance or proof reading). Please note that acknowledgments are optional.

## Highlights

The authors are also asked to provide a set of three to five highlightson the title pagethat summarize the main points of the STRP product. Each individual highlight should be a maximum of 85 characters long, including spaces.

The highlights should be broad in scope and emphasising key findings, the added value, and innovative aspects of the output. The information should be meaningful, easy to understand, and suitable for different forms of media. The authors should also use active voice instead of passive voice.

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| **Examples**   * New method shows promise for wetland conservation. * Study finds restoration of degraded wetlands can improve water quality. * Analysis shows link between wetland vegetation and carbon sequestration. * Results suggest importance of wetlands for waterfowl habitat. * New method improves accuracy of wetland hydrological modeling. |

## Declaration of interest

All authors must disclose any potential conflicts of interest, including financial and personal relationships with other people or organizations, that could affect their objectivity. Examples include employment, consultancies, honoraria received, paid expert testimony, and grants or other funding. Authors must disclose explicitly whether potential competing interests do or don't exist, even if no competing interests exist on the title page.

If there are no interests to declare then please state this: 'Declarations of interest: none'.

## Content identification

The [International Standard Book Number](https://www.isbn-international.org/) (ISBN) is a numbering system that provides publications with a unique identifier to make it easier for readers to find relevant publications. The Secretariat will ensure that each STRP publication is issued with an ISBN number. This will allow the Secretariat to better manage the metadata for STRP publications and ensure their maximum discoverability.

STRP products are published under [Creative Commons license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/) and will be made available free for everyone to read and download.

## Data availability (if applicable)

Where relevant, the lead author is requested to include a data availability section on the title page (sample below) to provide readers with information on any dataset that has been used. This is not needed for STRP products that are not based on primary data.

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| **Data availability**  Datasets related to this publication can be found at [INSERT PERMANENT URL(s) TO BE LINKED TO the DATASET], hosted at [NAME OF HOSTING REPOSITORY] ([CITATION TO DATASET]). |

Datasets may also be cited at appropriate places within the main body of the STRP publication and included in the reference list, or where relevant submitted as supplementary materials.

# Guidance for specific publications

## Abstract, executive summary, and key messages

The obligation to produce an abstract, executive summary, and key messages for an STRP publication vary depending on the type of publication being produced. The lead author should check the guidelines for each publication type to determine the specific requirements. Some publications, such as Briefing Notes and Technical Reports, may require an abstract, while another may require an executive summary and key messages. It is important to carefully review the guidance for each publication type to ensure that all requirements are met.

**Abstract**

The abstract is used for dissemination of the publication and helps readers to decide whether to use, cite or further share it. It is essential to invest sufficient time and effort in writing the abstract.

The abstract should:

* be concise, structured, and not exceed 300 words
* be self-contained and include:
  + clear statement of purpose and underlying mandates (e.g., resolutions)
  + methodology (if applicable)
  + results (if applicable)
  + main conclusions and recommendations
* avoid abbreviations
* not contain any references or hyperlinks.

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| **Example**  **Abstract from Briefing Note 13:**  Transformation of agricultural practices and systems is needed to reverse the trend of wetland loss and degradation, while simultaneously providing food for the increasing human population and maintaining adequate food production in a time of rapid environmental change. Wetlands are part of the agricultural system – they provide water for crops, livestock and aquaculture, habitat for rice production and pond fisheries and help to regulate the environment. Wetlands, however, are also subject to significant pressure from agriculture as a result of land conversion, excessive use of nutrients and pesticides, non-sustainable extraction or diversion of water, and over-exploitation of biodiversity.  This briefing note summarises current global knowledge on wetland-agriculture interactions and draws attention to case studies that provide positive examples of efforts to transition to wise use of wetlands as a contribution to more sustainable agriculture. It calls for immediate action to address the most pressing issues facing wetlands – particularly through dialogue between the wetland and agriculture sectors. |

**Key Messages**

In addition to the abstract, the authors are also asked to provide a set of key messagesthat summarize the main points of the STRP product. These messages should be broad in scope and highlight the key findings, added value, and innovative aspects of the output.

* Each key message should be brief, consisting of one or two sentences each.
* Information should be meaningful, easy to understand, and suitable for different forms of media.
* Use active voice instead of passive voice.

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| **Example**  **Key Messages from Briefing Note 13:**   * Expansion and intensification of agriculture is occurring in many regions to meet growing food demand. During the past 100 years, crop and grazing lands increased from 27.2 to 46.5% of the world’s total land area. * Wetlands, including many Wetlands of International Importance, are being destroyed by agriculture. The extent of natural wetlands has declined by 35% since 1970 in areas for which data is available, while human-made wetlands, including rice paddy fields and reservoirs, increased by 233%. Agricultural development is a primary cause of wetland loss through drainage and infilling. * Remaining wetlands are also impacted. Over the past 20 years, the intensification of agriculture has led to increased extraction and diversion of water for irrigation and mounting pollution due to a rising global trend in fertilizer and pesticide use. * Knowledge of the interactions between different agricultural systems (intensive, extensive, integrated) and inland, coastal and human-made wetlands is needed to improve environmental policies relating to use of water, fertilizers and pesticides; land management; and to guide on-ground initiatives to promote sustainable agriculture. * Sustainable agriculture should not damage the ecological character of wetlands. By definition, sustainable agriculture “conserves land, water, and plant and animal genetic resources, and is environmentally non-degrading, technically appropriate, economically viable and socially acceptable”. This is consistent with maintaining the ecological character of wetlands and ensuring their wise use as defined by the Convention on Wetlands. |

**Executive Summary**

The executive summary is a brief, condensed version of the STRP publication that highlights its most important points. The purpose of an executive summary is to provide a brief overview of the main points and recommendations contained in the STRP publication, in a way that can be easily understood by different target audiences who may not have the time or inclination to read the full report.

An effective executive summary should accurately convey the key findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the larger document, while highlighting its most important aspects and providing a compelling case for action. It is further important to emphasize that the executive summary should be able to stand on its own, separate from the main publication.

The executive summary should not exceed two pages.

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| **Example**  Please see Technical Report 11 on [Global guidelines for peatland rewetting and restoration](https://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/rtr11_peatland_rewetting_restoration_e.pdf) for an example of an executive summary. |

## Policy Briefs

Policy briefs are concise documents that summarises information on a specific wetland-related issue or subjects, with the goal of informing and guiding decision-making. typically aimed at policy makers within governments or their agencies, a policy brief offers policy recommendations and analysis based on sound scientific evidence. it is important to consider the specific audiences the document seeks to target and the relevant levels of government from the outset. policy briefs may also be useful for non-technical audiences, such as journalists or researchers. while they are intended for a non-academic and non-technical audience, policy briefs should still provide enough information and scientific evidence to support informed decision-making. however, they should avoid lengthy analyses or reviews of the literature.

When developing a policy brief, it is important to keep the needs of policy makers in mind, as the purpose of the document is to facilitate decision-making. To achieve this goal, it is crucial to identify the specific decision that the policy brief seeks to address. when planning and developing the policy brief, consider the following key questions:

* What is the policy context, including sectoral aspects and institutional mandates, that is relevant to the policy brief?
* What information would policy makers expect to see in the policy brief?
* What questions would policy makers like to have answered by the policy brief?
* What information do policy makers need in order to make informed decisions or implement changes?
* What information would help a policy maker convince others of the need for further action?

By keeping these questions in mind and tailoring the content of the policy brief to meet the needs of policy makers, the brief can be a valuable tool for informing and guiding decision-making on wetland-related issues.

Existing Policy Briefs are available here for review:   
<https://www.ramsar.org/resources/ramsar-policy-briefs>.

**Structure of the Policy Brief**

As part of the planning and conceptualization of any STRP publication, a draft Table of Contents should be developed in collaboration with the Secretariat. The following Table of Contents can serve as a roadmap for the publication, outlining the main topics and sections that should be covered. By developing a draft Table of Contents early in the planning process, the lead authors can ensure that the publication is organized logically and effectively, and that all relevant topics are covered in a comprehensive and coherent manner. The Table of Contents can be revised as needed throughout the writing process, but having a clear initial plan in place is an important first step.

* The total word count of the policy brief should be around 2,000 words (excluding the title page).
* Please provide in-text citations and bibliographic references, even though these will not be included in the final published brief.

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| **Template**  The template related to policy briefs can be found on the STRP workspace:  [Link] |

**Draft Table of Contents**

1. Title page

* See section 4 for details on what to include on the title page.

1. Abstract and key messages

* See section 5.1 for details on how to write-up the abstract and key messages.

1. Background (side bar, c. 100 words)

* Briefly describe the mandate for the Policy Brief.

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| **Example**  **Background from Briefing Note 12**  This Briefing Note was prepared by the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) of the Convention on Wetlands, in response to Resolution XIII.14, Promoting conservation, restoration and sustainable management of coastal blue-carbon ecosystems. This Briefing Note, which is based on a desktop study of blue carbon ecosystems in Ramsar Sites, describes the spatial extent, ecological characteristics and condition of coastal blue-carbon ecosystems across Ramsar Sites. |

1. Policy recommendations (up to six bullet points)

* State the recommendations of the STRP clearly and concisely.
* Recommendations should be backed up by evidence. They should be action-oriented but not prescriptive.
* Look at existing policy briefs for ideas on styles of expression.

1. The issue (c. 300 words)

* Describe the context; explain why it matters and the stakeholders involved.
* Explain the causes and effects of the current situation.

1. Analysis (c. 1,000 words)

This section should provide the basis for the recommendations and it may be divided into two or more sections.

* Present and evaluate the arguments and the evidence.
* Outline the policy options and implications of each option.
* Use language that a policy-maker would be familiar with.
* Use evidence summarized from academic literature and other sources to support your findings and advance your recommendations.

1. Limitation and further research (c. 150 words)

* State any limitations to the knowledge and state of evidence on the issue, and identify any further research which could further inform policy options.

1. Further reading (c. 200 words)

* Provide a list of sources of further information for interested readers. This should be based on but not limited to the sources referenced in the text of the final draft text.

## Technical Reports

Technical reports are research-based documents that provide in-depth technical notes, background reviews, and reports to contracting parties and the broader wetland community. These reports contain summaries of the latest and best available scientific information on wetlands, with the aim of promoting increased and longer-term accessibility to technical information related to the convention. Technical reports are intended for a specialized audience, including scientific and academic communities, as well as wetland practitioners, to ensure that the latest and most relevant research is available to inform wetland management decisions. By providing detailed technical information, technical reports play an important role in supporting evidence-based decision-making and promoting sustainable wetland management practices.

When developing a technical report on wetland conservation and wise-use, it is essential to consider the report's purpose and intended audience. Technical experts and practitioners should take into account the following considerations to ensure the report's relevance and usefulness:

* Identify the purpose: Determine what aspect of wetland conservation and wise-use the report is seeking to support. This may include requests from Contracting Parties, aspects of wetland wise-use and conservation, or Convention implementation. It is also important to consider the scale of the report's intended impact.
* Fill gaps in Convention guidance: Evaluate whether the report is seeking to fill a gap in existing Convention guidance. If so, ensure that the report provides new and relevant information to support decision-making.
* Address emerging or urgent issues: Assess whether the subject matter is an emerging or urgent issue on which valuable research has been carried out. This information can help guide the scope and focus of the report.
* Positive impact on wetland wise use and conservation: Determine whether the report will have a positive impact on wetland wise use and conservation. This assessment can guide the report's recommendations and conclusions.
* Usefulness for practitioners and scientific community: Consider how practitioners and members of the scientific community can use the findings of this report. The report should provide practical and actionable recommendations to support wetland wise use and conservation efforts.

By taking these considerations into account, the STRP can develop technical reports that are relevant, useful, and impactful. Existing technical reports are available here for review:   
<https://www.ramsar.org/resources/ramsar-technical-reports>.

**Structure of the Technical Report**

As part of the planning and conceptualization of any STRP publication, a draft Table of Contents should be developed in collaboration with the Secretariat. The following Table of Contents can serve as a roadmap for the publication, outlining the main topics and sections that should be covered. By developing a draft Table of Contents early in the planning process, the lead authors can ensure that the publication is organized logically and effectively, and that all relevant topics are covered in a comprehensive and coherent manner. The Table of Contents can be revised as needed throughout the writing process, but having a clear initial plan in place is an important first step.

* The total word count should be around 15,000 words (excluding the title page).
* Please provide in-text citations and complete bibliographic references.

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| **Template**  The template related to policy briefs can be found on the STRP workspace:  [Link] |

**Draft Table of Contents**

1. Title page

* See section 4 for details on what to include on the title page.

1. Abstract (see section 5.1)

* See section 5.1 for details on how to write-up the abstract.

1. Background (side bar, c. 100 words)

* Briefly describe the mandate for the Technical Report.

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| **Example**  **Background from Briefing Note 12**  This Briefing Note was prepared by the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) of the Convention on Wetlands, in response to Resolution XIII.14, Promoting conservation, restoration and sustainable management of coastal blue-carbon ecosystems. This Briefing Note, which is based on a desktop study of blue carbon ecosystems in Ramsar Sites, describes the spatial extent, ecological characteristics and condition of coastal blue-carbon ecosystems across Ramsar Sites. |

1. Executive summary (c. 1,500 words)

The executive summary should be able to stands completely on its own, allowing the reader to gain a comprehensive overview of what the technical report discusses.

* Present succinctly the main arguments, findings and messages contained in the report.
* Use appropriate language for the target audience (see section 2.3)
* If applicable, include suggested actions or action-oriented recommendations.
* Refer to supporting evidence and literature included in the report.
* Include a concluding statement.
* Section 5.1 provides additional details on how to write-up the executive summary.

1. Key Messages (up to 10 bullet points, c. 500 words)

* Key findings and messages should be action-oriented and include the main take away messages for the reader.
* They should be based on the information and evidence contained in the report and not present new findings or arguments.
* Section 5.1 provides additional details on how to write-up the key messages.

1. Introduction (c. 1,000 words)

* Describe the context for the report, explaining the importance of the subject matter and relevant stakeholders.
* Outline the purpose of the report.
* Provide a brief outline of the material that will be discussed in the following sections of the report.

1. Main body (c. 10,000 words)

* For each section of the report, briefly summarize what it will address and discuss.
* Present the state of the art for the topic(s) being considered in the report.
* Describe your arguments, and the supporting evidence.
* If applicable, Include relevant and regionally balanced case studies and best practices.

1. Limitations and future research developments (c. 500 words)

* Address limitations in the state of the art or availability of information.
* Outline any foreseen research developments.
* Identify any future trends or scenarios.

1. Conclusions (c. 500 words)

* Conclude with a summary of the findings and take-away messages.
* Do not introduce new arguments.

1. References (c. 1,000 words)

* Provide a complete reference list (see section 2.9).

## Briefing Notes

Briefing notes are meant to be a tool for sharing scientific and technical information about wetlands with a wider audience. Unlike technical reports, which are more detailed and in-depth, briefing notes are concise and focused on practical applications. They are designed to be accessible to wetland practitioners, including wetland managers, protected area managers, and staff of wetland education centers, as well as others responsible for the wise use and implementation of the Convention at the national level. By providing a more hands-on approach to wetland management, briefing notes should bridge the gap between theory and practice. The should offer practical guidance and solutions for addressing the challenges of wetland conservation and management and as a useful resource for staying up-to-date on the latest trends and best practices in wetland management.

Existing briefing notes are available here for review:

<https://www.ramsar.org/resources/ramsar-briefing-notes>.

**Structure of the Briefing Note**

As part of the planning and conceptualization of any STRP publication, a draft Table of Contents should be developed in collaboration with the Secretariat. The following Table of Contents can serve as a roadmap for the publication, outlining the main topics and sections that should be covered. By developing a draft Table of Contents early in the planning process, the lead authors can ensure that the publication is organized logically and effectively, and that all relevant topics are covered in a comprehensive and coherent manner. The Table of Contents can be revised as needed throughout the writing process, but having a clear initial plan in place is an important first step.

* The total word count should be around 5,000 words (excluding the title page).
* Please provide in-text citations as well as bibliographic references.

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| **Template**  The template related to policy briefs can be found on the STRP workspace:  [Link] |

**Draft Table of Contents**

1. Title page

* See section 4 for details on what to include on the title page.

1. Abstract

* See section 5.1 for details on how to write-up the abstract.

1. Purpose (side bar, c. 100 words)

* Describe the purpose of the Briefing Note.

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| **Example**  **Purpose from Briefing Note 12**  The purpose of this Briefing Note is to expand knowledge on the extent and status of blue carbon ecosystems in Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites) and explore the contributions these ecosystems can make to climate change mitigation and adaptation through nature-based solutions. This Briefing Note also supports the application of the Convention on Wetlands’ wise use guidelines to blue carbon ecosystems to protect their capacity to sequester and store carbon, as well as the many other benefits they provide, contributing towards the Convention’s mission of promoting the wise use of wetlands. |

1. Background (side bar, c. 100 words)

* Briefly describe the mandate for the Briefing Note.

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| **Example**  **Background from Briefing Note 12**  This Briefing Note was prepared by the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) of the Convention on Wetlands, in response to Resolution XIII.14, Promoting conservation, restoration and sustainable management of coastal blue-carbon ecosystems. This Briefing Note, which is based on a desktop study of blue carbon ecosystems in Ramsar Sites, describes the spatial extent, ecological characteristics and condition of coastal blue-carbon ecosystems across Ramsar Sites. |

1. Key Messages (up to eight bullet points, c. 300 words)

* Summarize the specific findings and implications of the Briefing Note.
* Key messages should be action-oriented and concise.
* Section 5.1 provides additional details on how to write-up the key messages.

1. The issue (c. 300 words)

* Describe the context and why it matters.
* Briefly summarize the content and objectives of the Briefing Note.

1. Main body (c. 3,000 words)

The main body of the report can serve several purposes:

* Summarizing the initial scoping of a larger STRP task:
  + Identifying target audiences
  + Outlining the TOR for technical work to be carried out
  + Reporting on the results of an exploratory review of scientific literature
* Collating and analysing other relevant work on a specific topic or issue and providing a thematic overview of the current state of knowledge in the field
* Reviewing and synthesizing relevant scientific information on an issue of specific interest to the Convention
* Providing advice and recommendations on a relevant emerging issue
* Serving as a source of background and supporting information for a scientific or technical draft resolution
* The report should be informative, evidence-based, and accessible to a wide range of stakeholders:
  + Policymakers
  + Scientists
  + Practitioners in the field of wetland conservation and management

1. References (c. 1,000 words)

* Provide a complete reference list (see section 2.9).

## White papers and supplementary materials

White papers and supplementary materials are unofficial documents in the field of wetlands research and management associated with topics related to specific TWAs and the priority tasks being implemented by the STRP. These materials will typically contain additional information, data, or analyses that are not included in the main STRP publications and are made publicly available by the Convention to promote transparency and facilitate access to relevant information.

It is important to note that these documents are not peer-reviewed or subject to the same level of scrutiny as the STRP publications. As such, they should be viewed with a critical eye and considered in the context of other available information.

**White papers**: Standalone documents that provide other types of information or analysis on a particular topic or issue. They are often produced by expert consultants or organizations with specialised knowledge in a given field. White papers may include data, analysis, or recommendations, and are not peer-reviewed. Unlike supplementary materials, white papers are not part of a larger publication.

**Supplementary materials**: Additional materials that are included as part of a larger STRP publication, such as technical reports. They may include data sets, additional figures or tables, or other information that supports the main findings or conclusions of the STRP publication.

**Structure of the supplementary materials and white papers**

The structure of supplementary materials and white papers will depend on the type of work being carried out for the STRP. However, it should be structured in a clear and organized manner, providing a comprehensive overview of the subject, evidence-based analysis, and actionable recommendations.

# Annexes

## Annex I: Common terms

[Forthcoming]

1. https://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/cop12\_res05\_new\_strp\_e\_0.pdf. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)